Nathan
Dayspring
Askani'son
Summers.
Cable.
ARBOR MAGNA.
THE HATCHERY.
I hope the resurrection process wasn't too *arduous?*
The yolk really does get *everywhere,* Chuck. But my *T/O viral load's* back to normal levels--and I see you installed the ***stealth arm*** as instructed, Hope...
The Five work to *order,* Dad. Just...do me a favor and don't come *through* here again for a while, okay?
Hey, *Junior.*
...
I'll do my *best...*

...but John here might have other ideas.
I might.
Time we had a little talk.
If he's here to cause trouble...
It's fine, Hope. I'm in the mood for a little post-resurrection workout.
That said...let's settle this away from the delicate business of the Five, shall we?
Fine by me.
No need to put your old bones back in the dirt in front of your kid...
Ugh. Was Proudstar always such a jackass?
He was always... troubled.
I'd never spy into his thoughts, of course. But after so long dead, with the world moving on without him...
"...I can't help but worry."
Heh. Charles is worried about you.
Baldy and his savior complex.
Ready to get down to business, Junior?

Always.
CLICK
The *Stealth Arm* is now shielding us from all *surveillance*--including telepathic--
--while holo-casting a deepfaked stream of you *cursing me out*--extrapolated from our encounter in the *Red Lagoon*.
That was a very believable *performance* you gave, John. Kudos on your acting skills.
I wasn't *acting.*
I meant *every* [redacted] *word.*
You and Frost...you *used* Jimmy. Put him on *your* path, made him fight in your personal wars. And yeah, I *wasn't* there.
But I'm here now.
And I say there'll be *consequences* for it--soon as we fry the *bigger fish*.
What are *you* lookin' at?
Me?
I'm looking at all this *testosterone* floating about, mate. You could cut it with a knife.
We gonna talk about *Brand* today or what?

[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

X-MEN RED

POWER GRAB!

On Arakko, the mutant planet (formerly known as Mars) populated by Krakoan and Arakkii mutants alike, Brand has begun assembling her own team of X-Men for the purpose of gaining control of the new world. Her team, and especially her most volatile recruit, Vulcan, have begun clashing with the Arakkii mutants and their culture, stirring up tensions.

Meanwhile, Storm, the Regent of Sol and member of the Great Ring, has formed her own Brotherhood to stand alongside the new hybrid mutant community.

[STORM]

[MAGNETO]

[SUNSPOT]

[THUNDERBIRD]

[VULCAN]

[BRAND]

[CABLE]

[MANIFOLD]

[FISHER KING]

[TARN THE UNCARING]

"Loss"

03

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X-MEN created by **Stan Lee & Jack Kirby**

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[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]
[00_00...0]
[00_00..03]

DESTROY
ENEMIES

SPECIAL CHALLENGE

THE CIRCLE PERILOUS
TODAY AT SUNSET

SON OF SUMMER
PRINCE OF KRAKOA
LOST EMPEROR OF SHI'AR
CO-CREATOR OF OUR VERY WORLD

VULCAN

CHALLENGES

TARN

WARDEN OF THE ABYSSAL PRISONS
HEAD OF THE VILE SCHOOLS
ENEMY OF ARAKKO
THE UNCARING

FOR THE SEAT OF LOSS

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGERS WELCOME

FIRST COME ● FIRST SEATED

DEFEND
THE LAND

S.W.O.R.D. STATION TWO. THE KEEP.
Vulcan versus Tarn, today at sunset. Out of a clear, blue sky.
What's your game, Abigail?
What makes you think it's anything to do with me?
Of all the seats on the Great Ring, Vulcan challenges for the Seat of Loss? The seat with the least cachet?
You know as well as I do that if it was him doing the thinking, he'd challenge Isca-- or take another shot at me.
And he'd lose. He knows that.
He'll lose against Tarn--
You didn't.*
* In S.W.O.R.D. #8.
Tarn was arrogant. He thought stealing my power gave him room to gloat--now he knows better.
Instead of gloating, he kills-- with a single thought.
You seem worried. Is it that you think Vulcan will lose, Storm?
Or are you worried he'll win?

I don't know. *Should* that be a worry for me, Abigail?
What *exactly* do you plan to do with one of *your people* on the Great Ring?
Our people, surely? Vulcan's a citizen of Krakoa-- Krakoan *royalty,* I hear.
And *Shi'ar* royalty as well...
He was *once.* Now the Shi'ar won't even officially acknowledge he *exists*--or *ever* existed.
And there's the little matter of *Empress Xandra* being on the throne...
Of course. *Silly me.*
But even *so*--once he's put the most hated mutant on Arakko down like a *dog,* I imagine he'll be royalty *here* too.
Someone has to be, after all.
Meeting *adjourned?* All right, Ororo.
I guess I'll see you in the *audience.*

S.W.O.R.D. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT :: TOP SECRET :: EYES ONLY

FROM: MARVIN FLUMM/MENTALLO
TO: COMMANDER BRAND
RE: GABRIEL SUMMERS/VULCAN

Thoughts after an initial mental deep probe -- *hoo boy.* I need you to start paying me danger money.

Look, if I do a deep scan of somebody and I don't want them to know about it, I can only get so much. That's the rules of the game at my level. I've never been one of those telepaths who can just go in and get every thought you ever thunk -- at least, not without you seeing me do it.

The point is -- I know what mental barriers look like. Everybody's got 'em. But this kid Vulcan's got something else.

It's like...I'm the Road Runner. And I'm running down the road towards a big ol' tunnel in Vulcan's mental mountain, all the way to the main brain vein -- and of course I zip right through it. No problem. *Meep meep.* And it's only after I've done it that I realize -- *wait a sec there, Marvin.*

That tunnel was painted on.

The Vulcan we see on the outside -- the guy who's messed up, but you can at least talk to -- that's...a painting of a tunnel in a cartoon. You can go right inside it, you can take a look around, but it's painted on all the same.

It's an illusion. So good it fooled even me -- and that's not the scary part. I think it'd fool Xavier -- I'm pretty sure it did just that. So if a lummox like me is seeing it, it's because it's starting to fail. And that scares me.

Anyway. If you fight Vulcan right now, you're fighting the painting. The real Vulcan is inside the mountain. And I think that's a guy who could maybe beat just about anyone on Mars.

Except maybe he'd incinerate everybody else in a square mile while he did it. Or maybe he'd crack the planet open like an egg. Or maybe he'd blow up the sun.

I don't think we want to break open that mountain, Brand. My advice is to find a black hole and drop the guy in it.

But if you still want him to go up against this guy Tarn...well, the good news is Vulcan's got access to all his powers, even if he isn't dialing them up all the way. Maybe that means he's not going to be strong enough unless we bring a side out of him we don't want to bring out...but he's definitely sneaky enough. I think I could help train him to make better use of what he's got.

Either way -- I'm not joking about the danger money. You want me to get in that head again, I want a raise. Get back to me.

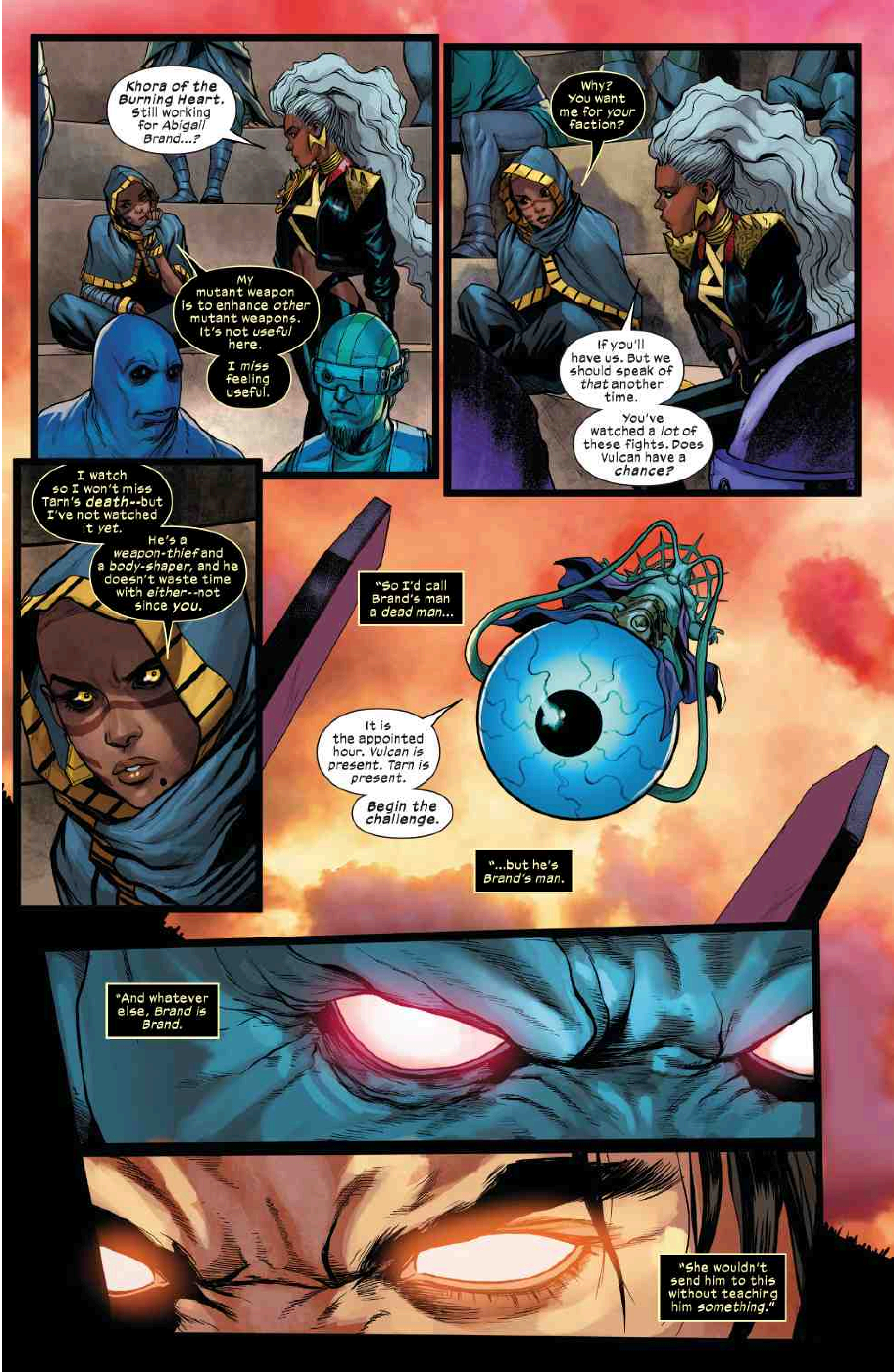
THE AUTUMN PALACE.
You're right that Tarn takes no risks these days, Ororo.
He's faced more challenges than ever since you fought him--lot of folk thought they smelled his blood on the Circle floor.
But it was their own--and it spilled by the gallon. You ask me, this Vulcan's dead already.
Krakoans make a habit of surviving the impossible, Fisher King--Vulcan especially.
If he wins...?
A good if to if about, Roberto.
Tarn took the Seat of Loss to hurt us--to signal our defeat. Who kills him will be hero of our world.
Should've been you, Ororo...
It would have lessened me. Tarn yielded--and he will again, with the right pressure.
Does that need to come from Vulcan though?
Anyone can challenge for a seat--at any time.
Though I hear it's better if you're an Omega-level mutant...
No.
Absolutely not.

Removing Tarn from the board--*from existence*--would pose no moral quandary for me.
But to set me in his *place?* Another *Krakoan,* to push Arakko toward what **we** wish it to be?
How does that make our *"Brotherhood"* distinct from **Brand's...?**
I don't see you on Krakoa *now.* Or frowning at us from *orbit.*
You built a *home* here, and you built it by *our ways,* with a door open to all. You've fought *alongside* us, not *above* us.
We **see** you, Max. ***You have a place in the broken land.***
We *don't say* that if it's not ***so.***
That...means a *great deal* to me, Fisher. In the time I've *known* you, you've become a dear and valued friend.
But even so...does your *single voice* give me the right to act for a ***whole world...?***
I share your reservations, Magneto. And I believe Tarn's blood on your hands would lessen *you,* as well.
But he is a *living reminder* of a ***dark past--*** a *thorn* in Arakko's paw, causing pain as long as he stays.
While I doubt Brand's *motives*...removing Tarn from power could make a *difference* here.
Perhaps we owe it to this world to ***try.***
...
You remind me of ***Charles.***

He asked me to try.
To work with him...make a difference.
So I worked--and together, we built our nation.
And then... I watched my daughter Wanda build our heaven.
The Waiting Room--that lets us resurrect all mutants.
Even mutants who died before their mutant gene activated are waiting in that room.
The hope that brought me, Ororo.
The joy, that those we'd lost were no longer lost...
I think of Wanda as my child. But she was not my first child.
First was Anya... my beautiful Anya...
...who I could not save... who...
...who died by fire...
Anya had no mutant gene.
I will never see her smile again. Never hear her laugh.
For me, our very heaven is a hell.

You...you are on the Quiet Council, Ororo--you know the betrayals we've suffered. The whole bloody business.
But that was what finally broke me. That, after everything...
No more. No more councils. No more damned utopias.
I no longer have the heart.
... I don't believe you, Headmaster.
Maybe you want to quit. To rest in peace.
But what you want to do and what you can do...
...those are two different things.
Ask me how I know.
...
You don't know, Roberto.
You don't know me at all.

SUNSET AT THE CIRCLE PERILOUS.
Bring up satellite feed.
All right, Gabe. Show me what you've got.
You can do this...
"...I trained you for it."
I think I'll melt you and paint a canvas with the goo. Immortalize you in art, as well as in your silly Krakoan eggs...
I was never in an egg, Tarn.
I never died.
Ah. Roberto Da Costa--Ororo's bartender friend.
Isca the Unbeaten, right? I hear you always win. At everything.
They say love is a battlefield...
It is the way I do it, bartender.
So be on your guard.


Khora of the Burning Heart. Still working for Abigail Brand...?
My mutant weapon is to enhance other mutant weapons. It's not useful here.
I miss feeling useful.
Why? You want me for your faction?
If you'll have us. But we should speak of that another time.
You've watched a lot of these fights. Does Vulcan have a chance?
I watch so I won't miss Tarn's death--but I've not watched it yet.
He's a weapon-thief and a body-shaper, and he doesn't waste time with either--not since you.
"So I'd call Brand's man a dead man...
It is the appointed hour. Vulcan is present. Tarn is present.
Begin the challenge.
"...but he's Brand's man.
"And whatever else, Brand is Brand.
"She wouldn't send him to this without teaching him something."

HNUHH!
Mind-blind.
My weapon. My genomic control. I can't feel it.
What have you done...?
Part of my gift...is siphoning energy. Any energy, if I'm taught how to do it--and I have been.
I can eat mutant power, Tarn.
As you were stealing mine...I stole yours.
Very clever.
But I learned a lesson recently--from one of your fellow Krakoans, in fact. A lesson about gloating over a weaponless foe.
Allow me to apply it.
Demons of Amenth. Two weapon-thieves.
It's a fight!

I'll strip your genes for my archives, Summer-son!
Strand by strand--
--with my fingernails!
Would that work on you...?
My weapon cannot be shut off. I cannot lose.
Funny. Neither can I.
Even when I do.
Oh, speak sense.
How can you lose without losing?
Distorted cur! Dog of Mars!
On your knees before your rightful king!
KRAK
Even a glint of the glory in this shell would strike you blind!
WHUDD
What do you have, Tarn the Malformed? What do you have to match my fire?
Face tentacles.
THAPP

WRUNNCH
K-kih yuh--
Uh-- kih--
You are allowed to bring non-mutant weapons, you know. Didn't you bring a knife? Who taught you to fight?
Oh, wait, I think I heard the tale--
--you were emperor of the bird people!
KRAKK
And their hollow bones!
And you're their king still, or so you ramble! Because you never died!
YOU NEVER DIED!
AAAHH--

There's a first time for everything.
THOOOM
Your challenger is dead! Tarn the Uncaring sits in the Seat of Loss! Praise Tarn!
I am the one who never dies! Have you not learned that?
What will it take for you to learn your place? Who will be next to fall?
Who will challenge me now?
I WILL.

I knew it.
Let me *think* about it...
I wanted to turn *away*. To *ignore* your stain on the planet I gave life to.
But what I *want* to do and what I *must* do are two *different things*...so I offer a *formal challenge*, Tarn.
Here and now.
Poor timing. Tarn's powers are *returning*--he'll stall another moment, then *slaughter* the old fool...
Sadly, I have to agree, Isca.
I bet you Tarn wins.

You-- you--
I will kill you where you stand--
Hrrk--
Isca! Put him down now--
That's how you lose without losing.
Challenge! Challenge by insult!
HRAARGH!
KRAK
NO!
Isca-- you have gone too far--
Fight me, then! I can never lose!
Don't you understand? Didn't any of you hear what he said? What he did?

I fought beside Tarn for a thousand years! I know him better than any of you! It should not be like this!
I can never lose!
I CAN NEVER LOSE!
Some commotion in the stands...?
A challenge by insult--no crime was committed. Direct your attention to what matters.
Tarn? Do you accept or yield?
Yes.
Yes, I do accept the--
--challenge--
THUNK

What...? What is this--?
We're allowed *non-mutant weapons,* I hear.
Your control of DNA is *psychokinetic* in nature. My helmet *blocks mental powers.*
And it's made of metal.
Goodbye, Tarn.
This blood on my hand, I accept.
...No.
No, not like this-- please--
I y--
SKLUTCH

And I accept what comes with it.
Magneto sits in the Seat of Loss.

NEXT

“Rebirth”

04

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Marauders #3
New Mutants #26
➤ X-Men Red #3
X-Force #29
X-Men #12
Sabretooth #5
Wolverine #22

ZONE